1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

White Bluff

HUGE, MOSS-HUNG OAKS FORM A CANOPY AND CAST filigreed shadows upon the White Bluff Road, which passes directly through the quiet Negro community of White Bluff, eight miles southeast of Savannah.

Winding roads turn from the main highway and terminate in the various sections which form the settlement and which are known as Nicholsonboro, Rose Dhu, Twin Hill, and Cedar Grove. The sections east of the White Bluff Road are on the Vernon River. It is here that many of the inhabitants make their living by catching crab and fish which they sell in the city markets. West of the highway the narrow roads lead through thickly wooded areas of great beauty. Along these roads families have cleared small tracts and built their homes, reserving garden space for flowers and vegetables. In the summer wild crepe myrtle trees, with blossoms as luscious a red as the heart of the watermelon, contrast colorfully with the bright blue paint on the doors and trimmings of some of the houses.

The White Bluff Road, which for two miles forms the main street of the community, passes the houses of other residents set well back from the road. Most of them are small and unpretentious but well kept. At intervals of perhaps half a mile are three rural grocery stores; farther along is a whitewashed church with red and blue glass windows, and at the farthest extremity of the settlement is a similar but larger church.

The inhabitants, of which there are approximately four

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Georgia

Harris Neck

TURNING OFF FROM THE COASTAL HIGHWAY NEAR Riceboro a tree-shaded dirt road leads to Harris Neck, a remote little settlement connected to the mainland by a causeway and located about forty-eight miles south of Savannah. Narrow, rutted roads curve and turn unexpectedly through the densely wooded area. Set singly or in little clusters of two or three and sometimes almost hidden by the trees and foliage are the houses of the inhabitants. There is a peaceful atmosphere about the entire island; life flows along in a smoothly gliding stream; the people seem satisfied for the most part with a simple, uneventful scheme of existence.

The first house we stopped at was that of Ed Thorpe,* a familiar and well liked character in the section. A small, neatly inscribed placard placed near the gate bore the owner's name. The attractive house was set well back from the road in a large grove of oak trees. A whitewashed fence protected the property.

The old man, who was eighty-three years old, was working in the side yard adjoining the house. His broad, erect shoulders and his bright alert eyes made him appear to be much younger than his actual age. He told us proudly that he had lived in this particular house for twenty-five years. Then he apologized because his present circumstances prevented him from having the house and fence repainted.

We discussed native Africans and Ed Thorpe remembered that his grandmother had come from Africa.

* *Ed Thorpe, Harris Neck.*

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NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

Pine Barren Near Eulonia

AFTER THE MUDDY RUTS THROUGH THE PINE clearing had ended, there was no road, and the car jerked and bounded about among the pine trees. The soft brown needles made better traveling than the boggy wagon tracks that were behind us, but our method of procedure was rather bewildering, for there was no mark by which to retrace our tracks. As we went deeper into the pine woods there was no sign of habitation.

Our driver,* who had offered to help us when our car had stuck in the bog, was a six-foot, shiny black Negro, strong necked and lithe, with a twelve-inch hunting knife strapped to his hip. We had never seen him before, nor the smaller Negro beside him on the front seat. In the back seat we were concerned with our feet, which rested precariously among loose cartridge shells. We feared that a sudden jolt from a pine stump might make us stamp down on the shells and explode them.

Suddenly we came upon a reed and paling fence higher than the head of a tall man. There was nothing to be seen over the top of it, no sign of occupation. We drove around to the side where, protected by some feathery bushes, a small opening hardly distinguishable from the palings led into an enclosure. Scattered without plan about a smooth sand clearing were three or four small unpainted wooden cabins, two connected by a narrow board walk just above the ground. Other smaller structures, sheds, and work tables were placed

* *Reuben Taylor, Eulonia.*

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NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

Possum Point

A WINDING TREE-SHADED DIRT ROAD LEADS FROM Darien up the Altamaha to the Negro community of Possum Point. The freshets in the section rise in the rainy season and the road is often flooded. On either side the trees are mirrored in the shallow water which surrounds them. In the spring against the fresh green of the trees and foliage there is the soft color of wild honeysuckle and Cherokee Rose. Through the thickly-massed trees the sun filters dimly; a misty, unreal atmosphere overhangs the entire scene.

Set back from the roadway are occasional small dwelling places, with boards turned dun-colored from age and exposure. Neatly tended vegetable and flower gardens stretch out to the front and sides of the houses. The owners can be found industriously working in the gardens, sitting on the porches, or gathered in little groups along the road. Here and there small bridges span the road, and at each of these a number of persons are often seen leisurely fishing, their long bamboo poles forming graceful arcs from the bank to the water.

We had been told that Alec Anderson was an old man and one who would be able to enlighten us regarding the beliefs prevalent in that section. We stopped a few times to inquire where he lived. After continuing for several miles, the road turned to the right. It swerved again a short distance later and continued in a narrow, uneven pathway through the woods. This section was but sparsely settled and we glimpsed a cabin only now and then.

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NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

SAPELO ISLAND

361 Small Negro settlements are scattered at the north end of
• 491 Sapelo and are reached by winding roads that cut through
the tropical woodlands and brush. The Negroes are de-
461 scendants of the slaves of the plantation era. Many lead an
easy, carefree life which consists chiefly of fishing, crabbing,
and cultivating a small patch of garden, while others engage
in regular employment at the sawmill or in the company
offices.

178 Living an isolated island existence, these Negroes have
preserved many customs and beliefs of their ancestors, as
well as the dialect of the older coastal Negro. An old oxcart
[493] (Plate XVI)[A] jogging along a tree shaded road is a familar
[412] sight, and under the guidance of a Negro boy named Julius
we discovered instances of crude wooden implements in com-
[124] mon usage. The many Negroes interviewed gave a graphic
picture of survival elements that have persisted since the
days when slave ships brought their ancestors to the new
country.

115 One of the oldest inhabititants is Katie Brown (Plate
XV),[B]* whose grandmother, Margaret, was a daughter of
Belali Mohomet, the Mohammedan slave driver of Thomas
Spalding. Katie, sunning herself on the back steps of her
small house, was disposed to be gracious to us. Shaking her
[123] head at the size of the shoes brought to her as an incentive to
conversation, she relented at the sight of some pipe tobacco
and began to talk:

533 "I dunno bout drums at chuches. Use tuh hab um long
534 time ago, but not now on duh ilun,—leas I ain heah um.
Hahves time wuz time fuh drums. Den dey hab big times.[22]
527 Wen hahves in, dey hab big gadderin. Dey beat drum,
rattle dry goad wid seed in um, an beat big flat tin
plates.[23, 25] Dey shout an moob roun in succle an look lak
mahch goin tuh heabm. Hahves festival, dey call it."

764 In response to our query about "set-ups" Katie replied,

* *Katie Brown, Sapelo Island.*

A, [See Category 493, plate following p. xxxii-U--Analyst]
B, [See Category 142, plates following p. xxxii-Q and R--Analyst]

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Georgia

St. Simons Island

131 ST. SIMONS, ONE OF THE LARGER COASTAL ISLANDS, lies off the Georgia coast not far from Brunswick on the mainland. For about fifteen years it has been connected by
• [491] causeway and bridge to the Coastal Highway. St. Simons
177 has always had a considerable Negro population, owing to the fact that from early times many large plantations as well as smaller settlements flourished on the island. This has given the Negroes considerable contact with white people and of late years with the rather sophisticated type of
124 tourist. Fearing that the old customs would have been forgotten, we had little hope of good field work here.

However, we had not worked half a day in the north end settlements of the island before we were happily surprised. Around Harrington and Frederica there still live many old Negroes who remember the customs and beliefs told them by their parents and grandparents. Most of them are intelligent, reticent, and proud. Not easy of approach but with good manners, they responded to the request to help record the traditional beliefs of their forefathers. Once they had realized the object of our conversation, they talked freely and graciously, and several were outstanding for their keen comprehension.

115 We went to see Catherine Wing,* who lives at the corner of the Harrington Road and the main Frederica Highway.
[342] Her comfortable frame house was set in the midst of a flower
[351] garden and her washtubs were conveniently placed under a grape arbor and spreading live oaks.
[296]

* *Catherine Wing, St. Simons Island.*

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Georgia

grape arbor and spreading live oaks. On the side road stood three stately pine trees from which hung silvery festoons of Spanish moss. Catherine was black, small, and lively at sixty-nine.

"Ise bawn in Meridian," she said, "but Ise lib mos muh life heah. Muh people belong tuh duh Atwoods uh Darien an tings heah on duh ilun is pretty much duh way dey wuz deah. Some tings is changed wut hadduh change, lak wen we hab a fewnul duh unduhtakuh come an git duh body an dey dohn lak yuh tuh hab no settin-up. In duh ole days we would sing an make prayuh all night an dey would come an measure duh body wid a string tuh make duh coffin tuh bury em in. Dey use tuh alluz sen yuh home tuh bury[1] ef dey could git duh money but dey ain eben alluz do dat no mo. Dey nebuh use tuh bury no strainjuhs in duh buryin[2] groun but heah dat ain kep strick needuh."

We asked about the dances and festivals of her youth.

"We use tuh hab big times duh fus hahves,[35] an duh fus ting wut growed we take tuh duh chuch so as ebrybody could hab a piece ub it. We pray obuh it an shout. Wen we hab a dance, we use tuh shout in a ring. We ain hab wut yuh call a propuh dance tuhday.

"One uh duh dances wuz call duh Buzzud Lope.[17] It's a long time sence we done it, but I still membuh it. We ain hab much music in doze days but dey use a drum tuh call duh people tuhgedduh wen dey gonuh hab games aw meetin.[26] It sho bin a long time sence I tought bout dem days."

Catherine told us that Ryna Johnson, who lived about a mile down the Harrington Road, was one of the oldest people on the island. Leaving the main highway, we followed the narrow, less traversed side road. It was a heavily wooded section. We viewed the massive-trunked hoary oak trees through a misty curtain of hanging moss. The fences along the road were covered with honeysuckle and wild grape. Shortly before we arrived at our destination, the road divided

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Georgia

to give way to a growth of towering oaks; then it joined again, resuming its winding trail through the quiet, shadowed countryside.

The little settlement now known as Harrington was formerly the property of the Demere family. A little less than a mile north of this settlement was Harrington Hall, home of Raymond Demere, who came to this country with Oglethorpe after serving ten years under Lord Harrington at Gibraltar.

To the left of the road was a small unpainted store operated by Ryna Johnson's daughter with whom she lived. Various advertisements on the front of the small building gave splashes of color to the green of trees and foliage.

Set back from the store was Ryna's house, surrounded by an expanse of short grass upon which a horse was grazing. The house was weathered with age, as were the vertical boards of the fence that enclosed the garden; here and there in the fence a new unpainted board, regardless of length, had replaced an old, and the top presented an irregular, jagged pattern. The cabin was the usual two-room affair but with a hall through the center and a lean-to in the back. The walls were papered with newspapers and, although there was a motley collection of objects and furniture, everything was scrupulously clean.

Ryna * was blind from cataracts and had not been feeling very well; so she had just got up from bed. Although her body was bent and very feeble, her mind was still clear.

"Ise bout eighty-five yeahs ole, but I caahn tell zackly. I belong tuh duh Coupers wen I wuk on duh plantation. It bin sech a long time I mos stop studyin bout dem days. But I membuh we use tuh hab good times."

In answer to our inquiry regarding any Africans whom she had known during plantation days, Ryna told us, "Alexanduh, Jummy, an William, dey is all African. I membuh ole William well an he tell me lots bout times in Africa. Dey

* *Ryna Johnson, Harrington, St. Simons Island.*

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115 We went by to talk with Charity Lucas, a fine looking upstanding, middle-aged Negro woman. She told us she did not know much about her father's people,—they had come from around Carolina,—but her mother and her mother's people had come from around Waycross and she herself had been born in Waycross. She said that the coast Negroes were very different from the interior people. She had heard talk of conjure and spirits around St. Marys but she didn't believe much in it herself; she had not been brought up that way.

Her son Robert (Plate XXII)[A], a tall, lithe, powerful young Negro of about twenty-five, was rather taciturn. He had heard of these things but didn't care to speak of them and didn't believe in them much anyway.

Charity advised us to go to see old Jim Myers. "Now theah's one that's ole an'll be able tuh tell yuh plenty. He's neahly ninety and sho likes tuh talk."

We asked if his memory were good. "Yes'm, it's as good as mine. I guess it's bettuh."

We asked for directions and she told us how to go, ten miles deep into the woods off from the St. Marys-Kingsland highway.

•491 Our road and what later turned out to be a pine needle wagon track carried us through Marianna, John Houstoun McIntosh's plantation, through Sweetwater Hammock and on through other settlements to Mush Bluff Island where old Jim Myers lived. The last mile we had to walk, owing
123 to some swampy patches in the wagon track. A Negro boy of about eleven sauntered around a bush, and his eyes popped open in frightened surprise at strangers appearing so suddenly in the woods.

"Does Jim Myers live near here?" we asked.

342 "Right theah roun the cawnuh of the path," he said, and we came suddenly upon the house, a three room unpainted, board cabin sitting about two feet off the ground on large,

A. [See Category 142, plate following p. xxxii-DD--Analyst]

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Georgia

and what kind of house they lived in. "She ain speak of wut kine uh house but she do speak of monkeys. They have monkeys all roun em and they dohn have tuh do no plantin cuz evrything is wile and they pick it off the trees."

We asked him if he could remember any African words he had heard his grandmother use. "They wuz funny wuds," he laughed, "I ought tuh be able to remembuh em but I caahn. She use tuh sing songs with African wuds. Ef I could study about em, I might remembuh some but now you ask me I jis caahn git em tuh mine. She did sing a chuch song wut have wuds we could unduhstand, an then in the middle of it she say 'yeribum, yeribum, yeribum, by,' and looked like wen she come to the en of each stanza, she sing 'yeribum, yeribum, yeribum, by.' It sho is a long time ago, them days."

Later we followed a deeply rutted sand road which led westward in the direction of Folkston. Few cars traveled this way and once during our trip we encountered an old fashioned two-wheeled ox cart whose driver guided his oxen deftly to one side in order to let us pass.

About three or four miles out on the road we turned in a gate and drove to the side of Shadwick Rudolph's * house. The old man greeted us smilingly. At first glance he did not appear to be the eighty-six years he claimed, but on closer observation we noticed that his eyes were dimmed from age. He talked with us for some time, telling us among other things, "I belong tuh Mr. Dave Bailey. He own Woodbine Plantation. Muh granfathuh, his name wuz Jim. He come ovuh tuh this country frum Africa. He tell me that ovuh theah they have houses made of palmettuh.

"Then, ole Nanny Mammy, she live at the plantation too, and she come frum Africa. She alluz set down tuh wuk; no mattuh wut kine uh wuk, she set down tuh do it. Nanny Mammy use tuh set down in the middle of the flo of uh house

* *Shadwick Rudolph, Folkston Road, near Woodbine.*

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
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South Carolina

Introduction

539 [i bɪnə dɹiŋk di βɔrə
ɛn i gɔt ɹait ɸə ste iə]

She has partaken of the water,
and she has the right to live here.

101 The life-styles, tales, and language peculiarities captured in this book were unearthed during more than nine years of research with the Gullah- or Geechee-speaking Sea Islanders of Georgia and South Carolina and three months of field work in Nigeria, West Africa. Like
121 most Americans, I was in total ignorance of the existence of the Sea Islands for many years—in my case, until 1972. Once I heard about them, no amount of library research and no amount of reading about the Sea Islanders could quench my desire actually to see for myself how they had managed to retain so many more remnants of their West African ancestry than African-Americans in other parts of the country.

133 On my first trip to the Sea Islands, in 1973, I remember crossing a bridge leading from Charleston to James Island, crossing another one
• 491 from James Island to Johns Island, and then another one from Johns Island to Wadmalaw. On Wadmalaw the scenery changed drastically, and the farther I drove along the narrow, winding road into the depths of this remote island, the more unusual my surroundings became: hanging moss; dense woodlands; flat, "boggy" swamps; and the musty, sweet aroma of ocean air. A person could get lost forever on these islands, I remember thinking. As I would later learn, it was this very remoteness which contributed to the continuation of the African-derived culture of the Sea Island area.

123 I turned around a deep bend in the road and continued on, ultimately

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
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South Carolina .

131 river island rather than a saltwater ocean island.[3] The islands just off
[103] the coast of Charleston include James, Johns, Wadmalaw, Edisto, and Yonges, among many others. The Sea Islands of Georgia extend on the northern coast from Harris Neck; on the southern coast they include Sapelo, Darien, St. Simons, and St. Marys.

133 The Sea Islands and surrounding areas were a mere submerged portion of the continental shelf during the early geologic history of North America. As time passed, the ocean retreated to its present position, and the low flatlands left behind became known as the Georgia and Carolina low country.[4]

The Sea Islands are tranquil, flat, swampy lands with elevations
132 ranging from near sea level to slightly over 100 feet. The climate is generally mild throughout the year, with very few recordings of drastically low temperatures. The coastal areas are characterized by slightly higher annual temperatures than other areas, primarily because of their proximity to the ocean.[5] The climatogram shown in Figure 1 illustrates the changes at various times of the year.

133 The Sea Island area is characterized by deep rivers snaking along the coast and dividing the land into countless large and small islands.
134 The sandy soil, which drains inadequately, places economic and developmental constraints on the area. Road building is extremely difficult
•[491] in spots; some islands still have no paved roads. The 1979 regional housing market analysis for the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester
134 (BCD) Council of Governments estimated that 90 percent of the land
109 area within Charleston County, which includes many of the Carolina
311 Sea Islands, is composed of soils that put moderate to severe limitations on land use for urban development. The soil has poor load-bearing capacities, in addition to the prevailing poor drainage. Thus, financing for development must include provisions for land improvement as well as adequate drainage systems. Of the 2,614 square miles of land within the BCD region, only 5 percent has been developed for urban use; remaining portions of the coastal region are primarily rural.[6]
133 Slightly more than half of the area is forest and woodlands. The marsh
137 and swamplands, nearly a quarter of the total, grow little but marsh weeds, owing to the ebb and flow of daily tidal waters. These lands are flat and dangerous; there are reports of unfortunate islanders' being caught in "suckholes" or "mashmud" and never returning. The overall
[311] pattern of land use is summarized in Table 1.

491 Few bridges, with the exception of wooden crossings, connected

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
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Table 1. Land Use for BCD Region

Category	*Acres*	*% of Total*
Developed areas		
Urban uses	75,000	4.29
Residential	21,000	1.20
Commercial	3,500	0.20
Industrial	12,600	0.72
Public and other	37,900	2.17
Agricultural uses		
Cropland and pasture	178,800	10.23
Forest and woodlands (excluding swampland forests)	861,740	49.30
Undeveloped areas		
Marsh and swampland	416,600	23.83
Inland waterways	140,800	8.06
Total	1,747,940	100.00

Source: BCD Council of Governments, *Regional Housing Market Analysis*, 1975, p. 5; figuring corrected.

the islands to the mainland before 1940. Though considerable sums of money have been expended within recent years on the construction of long, narrow bridges to span the Atlantic coast, ocean recesses, rivers, and streams, the more remote islands, such as Sandy and Daufuski, continue to be inaccessible except by boat.[7] Most of the Sea Islands remain very sparsely settled despite the population growth brought on by recent industrialization and commercialization. The landscape is pastoral and mysterious compared to inland areas of the United States. Most islands are characterized by graceful palmetto trees, expansive green terrain, and atmospheric haze. The landscape in fact bears a striking resemblance to the topography of such coastal countries as Nigeria, Ghana, Angola, and Liberia, the tropical homelands of the Sea Islanders' ancestors.[8]

Electricity came to the more remote islands only as recently as the 1960s. Streetlights rarely line the narrow roadways of even the more developed islands, and in late evening the overhanging trees give the roads a ghostly allure. After nightfall it is literally impossible to see even two feet ahead.[9]

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
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491 The main roadways branch into dozens of dirt roads angling around bends, across creeks, and through narrow passageways before 342 leading to small communities. As remote as some homes are, many are [177] large, fully equipped, and constructed of brick or wood with aluminum siding. These homes reflect modernization, improved education, and the rise of a younger, more affluent island society. Yet nestled amid these relatively expensive new homes are ancient, two-roomed houses, gray and weather-beaten but standing firm on the wooden blocks that have supported them for as much as a century and a half. These houses are called "shanties" by the islanders and are most often occupied by the oldest members of the community. Because islanders believe that [827] the human breath is the primary factor in preserving a dwelling place, even a young family will sometimes prefer living in a shanty which has been recently occupied to living in a newer, larger home which has [356] been vacated for a long time. Most shanties are kept neat and orderly—a remarkable housekeeping achievement, because as many as [592] ten people may occupy one of these tiny older homes.

In addition to the modern homes and the shanties, trailer homes are common on the Sea Islands, especially on islands with no bridges connecting them to the coast. The trailer homes are convenient and economical. They generally come fully equipped with modern conveniences, and they can be easily dismantled, loaded onto a barge, and floated to an island.

351 Many of the older and some of the newer island homes are built to share a common yard area, which is kept free of grass and litter and is 171 swept as part of the daily care. Maintaining a communal dirt yard was once routine for black families in the South, and it is also traditional in most West African villages. Even members of some of the most affluent African families, with expensive eight-bedroom homes, magnificent by any standard, keep the yard area completely free of grass by morning and afternoon sweepings. This smooth yard is functional on the Sea Islands as well as in Africa: keeping it grassless helps to eliminate insects and provides a clean, unlittered surface where children can play and elders can congregate to smoke, talk, and drink palm wine. This communal yard was the primary place where I was taken both on the Sea Islands and in Africa to listen to folktales and singing.

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
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surrounding area see Nichols, "Linguistic Change in Gullah"; and Charles Joyner, *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984).

4. BCD Council of Governments, *Regional Housing Market Analysis*, 1979, p. 2.

5. Waccamaw Regional Planning and Development Council, *Waccamaw Regional Housing Element*, 1977, p. 8.

6. BCD, *Regional Housing Market Analysis*, p. 21.

7. The residents of Sandy Island have requested a bridge from the local government, but at this writing none is expected in the near future. At present all building materials, appliances, vehicles, and the like must be brought from the mainland by barge. And though residents enjoy the seclusion during the spring and summer, they complain—the children particularly—about being ferried across the river during the freezing rains that frequent the Carolina coast in winter.

8. For a discussion of the demographic characteristics of the Sea Island area see Elizabeth Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*, vol. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1930); Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect;* Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969); and Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1690 through the Stone Rebellion* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974).

9. Many hags, ghosts, and spirits are thought to haunt these highways, and some islanders fear them much more than the alligators, wolves, rattlesnakes, and other creatures which may prowl along the swamp roads at night.

10. Merrill G. Christophersen, *Biography of an Island* (Fennimore, Wis.: Westburg Assoc., 1976).

11. Sandy Island, in Georgetown County, is inhabited entirely by African-Americans. However, some Sea Islands just north of Charleston and closer to the coast, such as Pawleys, Sullivans, and the Isle of Palms, are peopled primarily by whites.

12. Marina Wikramanayake, *A World in Shadow: The Free Black in Antebellum South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1973), pp. 158–59.

13. Jackson, Slaughter, and Blake, "The Sea Islands as a Cultural Resource," p. 33.

14. Frederic Bancroft, *Slave Trading in the Old South* (Baltimore: J. J. Furst Co., 1931), pp. 359–60. For further discussion of the slave trade in the Sea Island area see Georgia Writers Project, *Drums and Shadows* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1940; reprint, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1973) p. xviii; Wood, *Black Majority;* and Joyner, *Down by the Riverside*.

15. BCD, *Regional Housing Market Analysis*, p. 19.

16. BCD, *Report on Economically Less Developed Areas*, p. 14.

17. Ibid., p. 13.

18. Ibid., p. 18.

19. June Manning Thomas, "The Impact of Corporate Tourism on Gullah Blacks: Notes on Issues of Employment," *Phylon* 41, no. 1 (Spring 1980): 4, 5.

20. BCD, *Report on Economically Less Developed Areas*, pp. 13, 17.

21. Thomas, "Impact of Corporate Tourism," p. 6.

22. Quoted in Mason Crum, *Gullah: Negro Life in the Carolina Sea Islands* (Du-

41 Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
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South Carolina
Johns Island

4: Carawan & Carawan B,2-5 (1959-1988) 1989
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South Carolina
Johns Island

Star Hall to travel to other parts of the country to share their songs, in an effort to keep alive some of the older folk material. Each of these projects brought a complex mixture of success and problems and a renewed determination to keep trying.

For generations the Johns Island people were relatively isolated from mainstream America. The low, flat island, covered with tidal creeks and marshes, farmland, and forests of oaks draped with gray Spanish moss, was accessible only by boat until the early part of the century, when bridges and causeways connecting it with the mainland began to be built. Cut off from the mainland, these descendants of cotton plantation slaves retained many aspects of the old slave culture: a regional dialect, Gullah, still marked by distinctly African and Caribbean traits; a large body of folktales, cures, and supernatural beliefs; and a folk version of Christianity with a "shouting" style of singing old spirituals and hymns and a local "praise house" form of worship.

Old and new institutions existed side by side. For many people, Moving Star Hall—a tiny, battered clapboard building—had been the central meeting place for nearly fifty years. It housed a "tend-the-sick" and burial society, a secret lodge, and a community of worship. Here the members could express themselves freely and fully; in the Sunday night worship service each person took a turn preaching, testifying, praying, and raising a song.

Down the road a mile or so is Wesley Methodist Church, where a number of these same people attended regular Sunday services. Here the old folk ways were gradually being replaced by more formal modern practices. Wesley is a fine church with handsome pews, Methodist hymnals, a robed choir, and an organ. On the first Sunday of the month everyone listened to the Reverend G. C. Brown, who came from the mainland in the 1930s with a college degree, and sang hymns and spirituals led by the choir. But on the three Sundays a month when he preached in other churches, the congregation forgot about the organ and the hymnals and sang older spirituals, hymns, and shouts,

(P XII-A)

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
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Johns Island

133

[491]

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

Mr. William Saunders

WHAT I TALK TO PEOPLE ON THE ISLAND ABOUT IS POOLING OUR RESOURCES

There's no way that the island can stay unchanged. It's already changed. There was a time when I knew everybody on the island. I can't say that anymore. There's been such an influx of new people in the last ten years. There's a real new sense of direction there. The new people can always take advantage of the older people. Hopefully, we can control some of the change.

For the first time in my lifetime, the white and black communities have come together. Some of the whites who hated my guts back when you guys were there now are using me sometimes as spokesman to the county government. Some of them who would never have spoken to me, I've been in meetings with them and they'll say, "Let Mr. Saunders explain that." There's a Johns Island planning committee to look at what needs to be changed. I think we might be able to maintain our roads—if we could get some cutoffs on the roads, where those big farm vehicles or the school bus can pull over for the traffic—and if we can do it *and* save the big trees.

I wish I was in a position to get a group of people together to buy up a good bit of the land that is for sale on Johns Island. Some of it I would like to just sit. Some of it you could build the things that need to be done. I would like to see a nice Holiday Inn–type motel over there. There are so many people from the island that are living away from here that come home and their family don't have a house large enough for them to stay in. And they don't want to stay in the city, so they just crowd in together. But if you had a real nice hotel and just a nice restaurant, you could make money on it. There are so many things that could be done.

What I talk to people on the island about is pooling our resources to build the things that will be built on Johns Island. It can be done, but we would have to trust each other.

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

Mr. Abraham Jenkins

PEOPLE DON'T SEE THAT "BIG SANTA CLAUS" THEY ONCE THOUGHT OF

179 464 People saw what happened when all that money came in with Kiawah and yet no one that I know got in any of those administrative positions out there. You find a few people got into the more menial jobs. Ninety percent of the jobs are in the lowest level, and then maybe five to ten percent are in a higher bracket, but not up in the really well-paid bracket. So people don't see that "big Santa Claus" they once thought of.

Mr. William Saunders

THEY WERE NEVER CONCERNED ABOUT THE PEOPLE THAT LIVE ON THOSE ISLANDS

185 I get pretty upset about things. There was a million dollars spent on turtles on Kiawah, because these people were concerned about the turtles. But they were never concerned about the people that live on those islands.

177 491 (178) Still, as long as I can get some help from those people, then I don't have any problem with their lives. The moment all those rich people begin staying on Kiawah and Seabrook, they begin to improve the roads. Although it was built for them, I use it. It's accessible to everyone. And the people on Kiawah and Seabrook are pretty much conservationists, so they back most anything leaving things the way they are.

133

512 neighbor in the hospital of a nearby town. Young men some-
505 times go across the water again for recreation in town.
(574) Young women usually cannot drive either a boat or a car and are dependent upon some male family member for transportation if they wish to go into town for similar reasons. Electricity
365 came to the island in 1964 and changed the habits of the islanders considerably. Today television provides a major
207 source of recreation for most families in the evenings.
517 Children of ten and eleven watch it many hours in the after-
206 noons and evenings. Telephones have been available since 1972. Some children engage in frequent and lengthy conversations with their mainland friends after school. A new boat
504 landing is scheduled for completion in 1977, which will be
505 large enough to accommodate a ferry. With its completion, reliance on small motor boats will be phased out and mainlanders will have easier access to the island. When the ferry becomes operational, it is probable that the community will become much less of a closed community in important ways.

512 Weekends are reserved for the major social activities
[438] of the community. Saturdays are devoted to shopping for
[574] major supplies in town, or for entertaining mainland visitors and relatives. The major social event of the week is the
512 Sunday morning church service. Most islanders walk two or
796 three miles to the major church at the center of the island.
[493] A few families keep four-wheeled vehicles on the island, and
491 older residents ride in these. Roads on the island are sandy

491 one-lane affairs, which pass through woods of oak and pine
and marshes filled with cat tails. The church itself is an
346 impressive structure, built by the cooperative labor of the
461 men many years ago, each of whom hauled an allotment of con-
476 crete blocks from the boat landing in ox carts over the
493 deeply rutted sand roads. It was built in a location equally
368 distant from the "four corners" which were populated at that
time, and faces due east. Preceding the major morning ser-
794 mon, three Sunday-school classes are held simultaneously in
the church sanctuary, with oral reading and discussion of a
printed lesson a major component of the lessons for all age
796 groups. Formal preaching is held one Sunday each month, with
[793 morning and evening services conducted by a well-educated
[794 minister who comes from Georgetown. On other Sundays, ser-
794 vices are conducted by church members. The most prestigious
591 social group on the island is that of the Board of Deacons
of the church; this small group of six or seven of the oldest
595 men conducts the major business of the island. Other busi-
ness is conducted by two women's clubs or "lodges," which
often meet on Sunday afternoons in the abandoned schoolhouse.
Other social activities are parties, adult education classes,
music and dancing, and story telling. Community parties
527 are sometimes held in the old school building, and adult
893 education classes have been conducted there as well. Music
533 is a highly valued activity in every age group, as evidenced
535 both by the singing for Sunday services and by the dancing

6: Smith I,Y-5 (no date) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

CHAPTER I

AN ECOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION OF CONTEMPORARY SEA ISLAND SOCIETY

LOCATION OF THE ISLANDS

131 The five Sea Islands stretch along the Atlantic Sea Coast, south of the city of Charleston, South Carolina. The [491] Ashley River Bridge completed in 1922 connects the nearest sea island, James, to the southern tip of the city of Charleston. James Island is about two miles from Charleston.

131 133 The Wappo (Stono) River separates James from Johns Island by way of the Maybank Highway; Johns is five miles from Charleston. The Wadmalaw Creek separates Johns from Wadmalaw Island. Wadmalaw's eastern body gulfs around the south easterly tip of Johns Island. On the north westerly side, the Wadmalaw Sound separates Wadmalaw and Yonges Islands. Yonges Island (also known as St. Pauls Island) is neighbored on its north westerly side by the communities of Hollywood, Ravenal and by Meggett to the northeast. Many native islanders ignore the distinction and consider these communities as part of the large island.

Edisto the most distant island is forty-two miles from Charleston. The Edisto beach area located on the southern tip of the island sits in the Atlantic Ocean. Edisto is the largest of the Sea Islands.

7: Jackson L-5 (1973-1976) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

CHAPTER 1

101 The field research on which this dissertation is based resulted from three years of study beginning in July 1973 and continuing through August 1976. In an effort to restrict variational data, the field work was conducted primarily on Wadmalaw Island, South Carolina, because it is located further off shore and is less urbanized than many of the other Sea Islands. Linguistic research was also conducted on Johns, Edisto, Yongs and James Islands since I was informed by the inhabitants that the language varied from one island to the next. Bennett gives an account of noticeable interisland variation in the early twentieth century:

> There are, especially among the islands, plantations so remote... as once to have developed dialects within the dialect, the characteristic speech and peculiar idioms of one plantation differing so from those of another as to make it very possible for the adept to determine by a negro's peculiarity of dialect what community, sometimes what island...was the spokesman's place. (Bennett 1908:336)

Considering the multilingual history and the geographical inaccessibility of these islands, variation is by no means impossible, though the extent is yet unmeasured.

133 The Sea Islands are separated from the Atlantic coast and other islands by tidal channels and dense marshland. Before the completion of the bridges connecting several of them to the coast in the 1940's, inter-island communication was limited to a boat which traveled around the islands

505 weekly to bring persons to the mainland. Most inhabitants
[491] over forty remember these Saturday ferry trips to Charleston or to other islands to buy and sell their produce, arts and crafts.

433 Historically, the islanders were self reliant. Rice, indigo, and long staple cotton were resources that flourished well on the fertile soil, and brought substantial prices
[226] on the market. The ocean provided an abundant supply of crab, fish and shrimp, and the children learned the art of casting and netting at a very early age. Because most of
823 the islanders were fishermen, the ocean provided a topic
521 of interest and often evoked many natural responses ranging from earliest childhood encouters to near death feats.

132 Few Europeans inhabited the islands because of the heat
164 and the threat of malaria. According to Nichols (1976:20),

> an important factor in the low numbers of Europeans was their susceptibility to the malaria-bearing mosquito which thrived in the fresh-water swamplands. During the summer months and fall, which consituted the malaria season, the landowners moved to homes on the ocean or further inland. West Africans, on the other hand, had a genetic tolerance for the malaria parasite.

175 During the period from 1730 to 1840, Blacks
161 outnumbered Whites by a substantial margin. For example, in 1800 there were 2,150 Whites and 12,400 Blacks in Georgetown County. By 1840, the county contained 2,200 Whites and 18,000 Blacks (Jackson et al. 1974:33). Thus a geographical isolation, social and economic independence, and marginal contact with speakers of
197 English outside the Creole community nurtured an environ-
197

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island

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Through the kind offices of Chalmers S. Murray, of Charleston and Edisto Island, South Carolina, and Albert H. Stoddard, of Savannah, Georgia, and Daufuskie Island, South Carolina, the doors of their respective islands were opened to me. Their generous assistance will never be forgotten.

[127] To Foresta Hodgson Wood, I am deeply grateful for the many photographs she has generously contributed. To Clara E. Sipprell, Ralph Steiner, Dr. Orrin S. Wightman, Maxfield Parrish, Jr., and others I also give thanks for the use of various pictures.

To Creighton Churchill I am under obligation for his inspiring coöperation and sustained interest.

But for the help generously given by Mary Burnet, of Athens, Georgia, I doubt if this book would ever have been finished. My debt of gratitude to her is immeasurable.

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533 Thanks due these and other friends must not, however, obscure the fact that without the coöperation of the colored singers—the only people qualified through their racial background to present properly the traditional songs—there would have been no occasion for this book or these acknowledgments.

Although Julia Armstrong, of the singing Proctor family, has never told me the half of what she knows, particular thanks are due her for the help she has given since 1915. Her husband, Joe Armstrong, her brother, Willis Proctor, Cornelia and Edith Murphy, and others at the South End of St. Simon's have all aided in resurrecting old songs. Ben Davis, of the North End, comes of another family of singers, and special mention is due him for his loyalty and dependability. Bessie Cuyler, Catherine Ramsey, Peter Davis, Alec Stewart, and Mansfield Jackson have demonstrated the fine spirit on which the successful presentation of this type of music depends. There are other first-rate singers on the island, but the foregoing are singled out because they recognize that the requirements of the group take precedence over those of the individual.

[497] When a causeway was put across the marshes in 1924 and St. Simon's Island was connected with the mainland, we were able to include other Glynn County singers in our "Spiritual Singers Society of Coastal Georgia." Among those who have proved their devotion to the slave songs are Jeffry Union and Susyanna Vallion. Several of the children in the Broadfield contingent, trained by Susyanna and her assistants, Clara Roberts, "Coots" Hightower, and Gertrude Cohen, now sing at the Cabin on St. Simon's with the older group. In McIntosh County, Josephine Young is an able exponent of the old-style singing: so are Henry Shaw, Rosa Sallins, Julia Walker, Nancy and Alphonzo Thorpe.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

A Section of Beaufort District from Mills, Atlas of South Carolina (1825)

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

131 504 195 havens of the worlde" where "without danger all the shippes in the worlde myght be harbored."[1]

133 195 The coastal region of which St. Helena Island forms a part is, as Ribaut described it, "a country full of havens, rivers and islandes." Deep tidal rivers cut and divide the land into numerous islands of varying sizes, and the islands themselves are interlaced by broad tidal creeks. These facts recommended the region to the Spanish, French, and English as an ideal place for settlement, for as Robert Sandford, "Secretary and Chief Register for the Lords Proprietors of their County of Clarendon" in Carolina, said in 1666:

> the whole Country is nothing else but severall Islands made by the various intervenings of Rivers and Creeks, yett are they firme good Lands (excepting what is Marsh) nor of soe smale a seize, but to continne many of them thousands of acres of rich habitable wood land, whose very bankes are washed by River or Creek, which besides the fertility adde such a comodiousnesse for portage as few Countryes are equally happy in.[2]

133 134 [491] [489] 491 [484] These geographic conditions have also made for the isolation of the region. The soil is a light sand which makes road building difficult. The numerous marshes have to be crossed by causeways and the rivers by long bridges. It requires, therefore, a considerable outlay of capital to provide modern transportation facilities for the Sea Islands. As a result, most of them are still without bridges and good roads; they have been left to develop as they might. Today, in going to St. Helena Island, one must cross three rivers and two islands before one at last

[1] Jeannette T. Connor (ed.), *Jean Ribaut, The Whole & True Discouerye of Terra Florida*, pp. 90-91.

[2] A. S. Salley, Jr. (ed.), *Narratives of Early Carolina*, p. 101.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders, NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

arrives at his destination, for St. Helena is the buffer between two other islands and the Atlantic. Long bridges span these rivers now so that one may go all the way by automobile, but until 1927 one could cross Beaufort River, the largest of the three, only by means of a bateau which operated as a casual ferry between Beaufort and Ladies Island. But in the days when transportation was chiefly by water, these very rivers, which are now so difficult to span, were one of the chief assets of the region.

THE FRANCO-SPANISH CONTEST

The Spanish were the first to claim the St. Helena region both by exploration and by occupation. Spain, indeed, shows a record of one hundred and forty-two years of activity in this territory[3] before 1663 when King Charles II of England by letters patent included it in a grant to eight Lords Proprietors and delivered it to one hundred years of protested ownership before England finally gained a clear title to the region by the Treaty of 1763. In 1521 Francisco Gordillo and Pedro de Quexos, Spaniards, reconnoitered the South Atlantic seaboard, and after Quexos' expedition for Lucas Vasques de Ayllon in 1525, Santa Elena, as the Spanish came to call this section, was the most northern frontier of their Atlantic coastal region.

When Jean Ribaut explored this same region for Admiral de Coligny in 1562 and built Charlesfort on what is now Parris Island,[4] he called the vicinity Port Royal, the name which the English later adopted. Ribaut's fort

[3] Mary Ross, "The Spanish Settlement of Santa Elena (Port Royal) in 1578," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, IX, 352.

[4] Parris Island lies across Beaufort River from St. Helena Island.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

CHAPTER IX

THE AFTERMATH

A ST. HELENA PICTURE IN 1865

IT WAS SUNDAY in May, 1865. The sandy road, covered in the low places with a top dressing of oyster shells, led off among the cotton fields down the Island. On either side were sagging wire fences, reminders of plantation boundaries before the war, the wire sometimes propped by drooping posts, at other times deeply embedded in the trunks of fine trees forming magnificent avenues.

Here and there were small frame houses, with narrow porches and four or five rooms, the residences of former overseers. Rude pine-log cabins, newly built, and clapboarded shanties leaning crazily in the mid-day sun dotted the fields. Gardens of growing vegetables separated the cabins from the rows of cotton that extended away as far as one could see. Little stakes occasionally marked off private holdings, sometimes the only boundaries in fields of a hundred or more acres of cotton. Just beyond was a large tract lying fallow, covered with a luxurious growth of cassina and dewberries, or perhaps a young forest of pines had sprung up among cotton furrows which, though idle for many years, were yet plainly visible.

The cotton was small, for it was not more than four weeks out of the ground, but the corn was knee high. Neat ridges were already piled up about the cabins waiting until the young sweet potato slips were large enough for transplanting. Here the fields were beautifully clean, carefully hilled up with the hoe by the women and old